

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The curiosity to see the remains of the historical places makes the archaeological sites reverberate with the footprints of people of the present. To lift those forgotten, neglected past and bring the memory alive with due respect, is what archaeology achieves for humanity. Through the excavations, survey and analysis of available data, the archaeologists provide valuable picture of the past.

While visiting the excavated archaeological sites one can experience the incredible past so very closely.

The glorious history of Rajgir has left behind innumerable archaeological sites. Sir Alexander Cunningham, who is considered as the father of Indian Archaeology had been involved with a lot of excavations in Rajgir to rediscover its ancient life.

Jarasandha Ka Akhara

(Ran Bhumi / Battle Ground of the King Jarasandha)

The Wrestler King

The epic of Mahabharata narrates the King Jarasandha as an important character whose torturous rule came to an end when Bhima (second Pandava brother) killed him at this place. According to the legend of notorious Jarasandha, 99 kings were defeated and imprisoned by him to be offered as sacrifice. As he was a mighty and unconquerable wrestler so he used to challenge the kings to wrestle with him at his wrestling square. To put an end to Jarasandha's horrendous plan, Krishna advised Bhima to trick him in the duel to kill Jarasandha. This spot is believed to be the legendary platform for duals of the notorious Jarasandha.

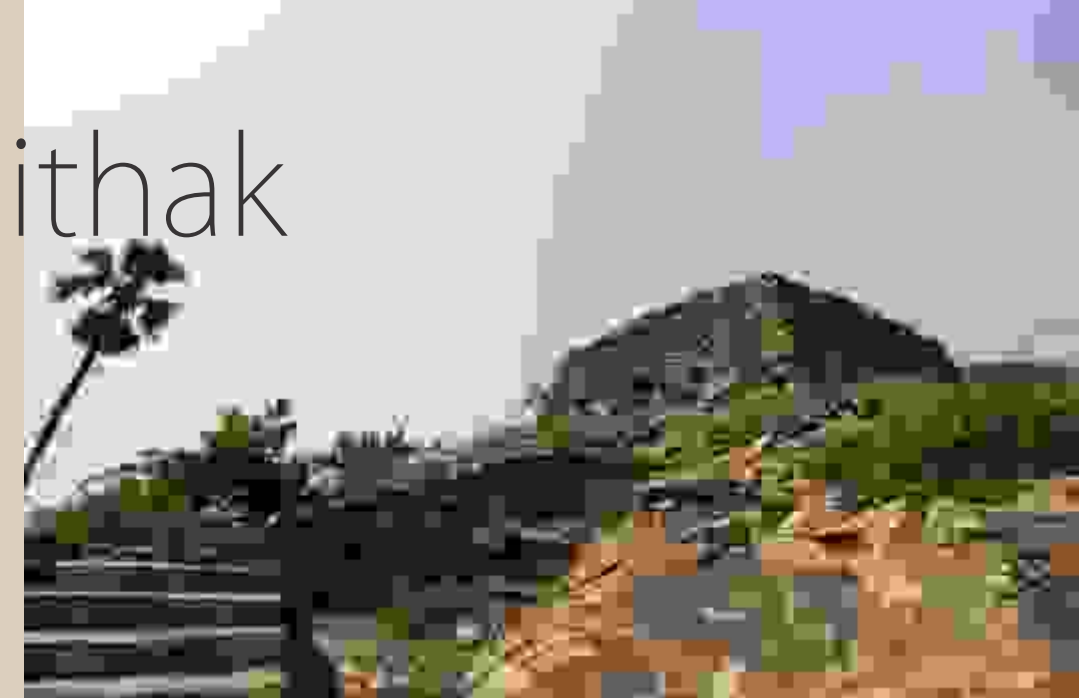


Jarasandha Ki Baithak

(Pippala Cave)

A fairly large 22' high ancient stone structure (Base– 85'x81'and Top – 81'x72') is locally known as Jarasandha ki Baithak. The legendary infamous King's meeting quarter. The spot is situated just above the Barahma Kund on the way to Saptaparni caves. However, some scholars believe it is a part of the cyclopean fortification wall that was built for some military purpose.

The Buddhist texts mentions this place as Pippala cave as the abode of Mahakashyapa, the Buddha's chief disciple. As per some academicians this place resembles Xuanzang's description where Devadatta (Gautama Buddha's cousin) breathed his last.



Chariot Wheel Mark & Shell Character

Was A Battle Fought Here?

Quite a few large wheel marks which are cut deep into the rocks of the ground of southern end of the valley attract lots of curious tourists to this place. There are also some traces of inscriptions in shell characters which are found on the rocks here. It is assumed that this script was in practice around 4th century CE.



Giriyak Stupa

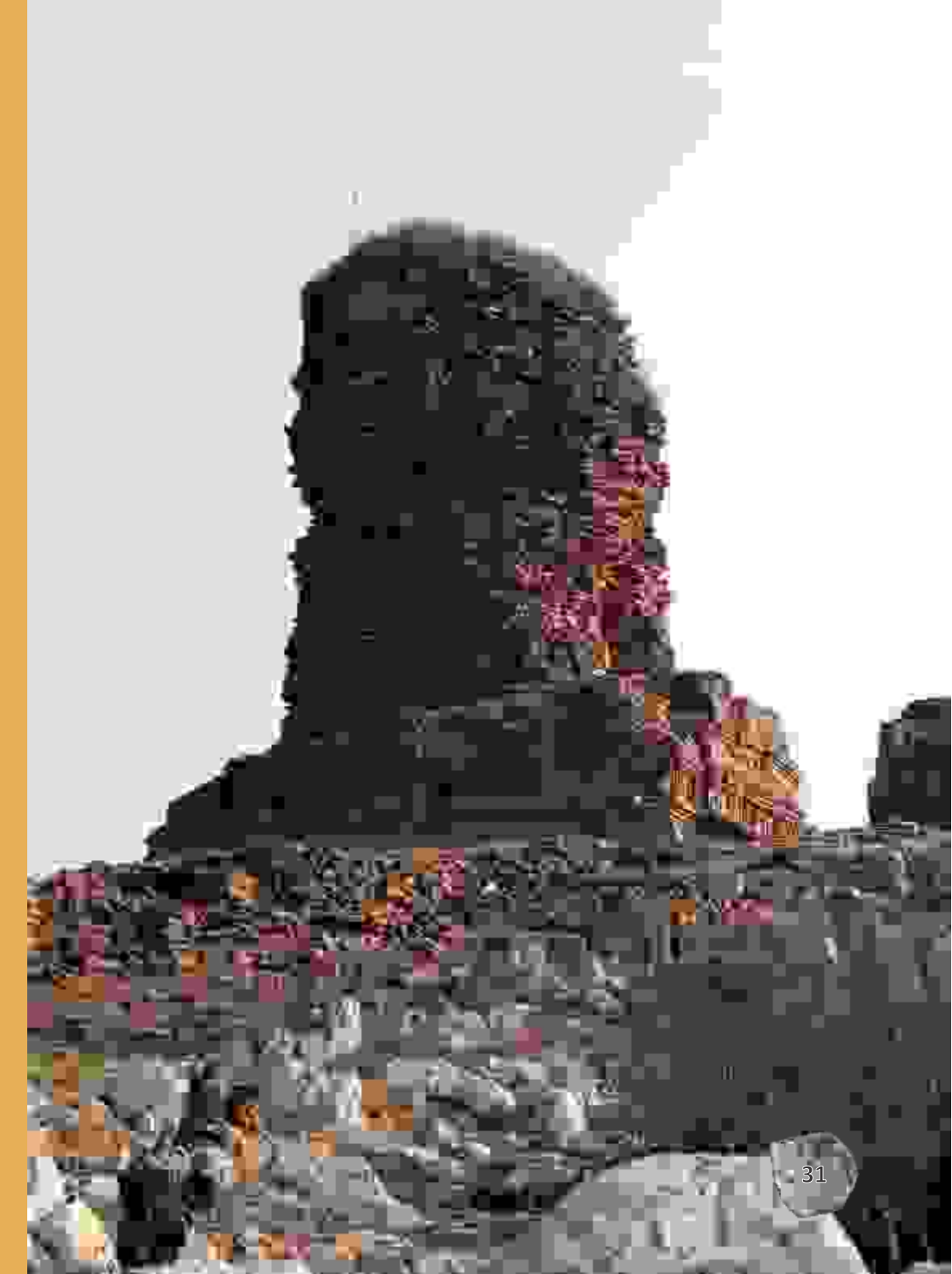
Atop The Hill A Cylindrical Stupa

The remains of this Stupa that has an unusual cylindrical shape is situated at the peak of a hill of the Sailagiri, away from the hustle bustle of the main city.

The remarkable ancient 20' (approx.) stone rubble path that leads to the Stupa at the peak is a proof that this was an important destination for a large number of devotees. From the remains of the decorative stuccos one can assume that once this was a well patronised pilgrimage. The size of the Stupa presently measures about 31' high along with the base pedestal.

The wonderful Ghoda Katora Lake surrounded by the green span of forests can be viewed from the hilltop behind the Stupa.

Some academicians believe that this is the Stupa which was once called as Hansa Stupa.





Parwati

The Sudden White Hillock

The isolated white stone hillock suddenly appears in the horizon in the midst of the vast plain land where the Buddha meditated in the Indrashala cave situated on the south side of the Parwati hill.

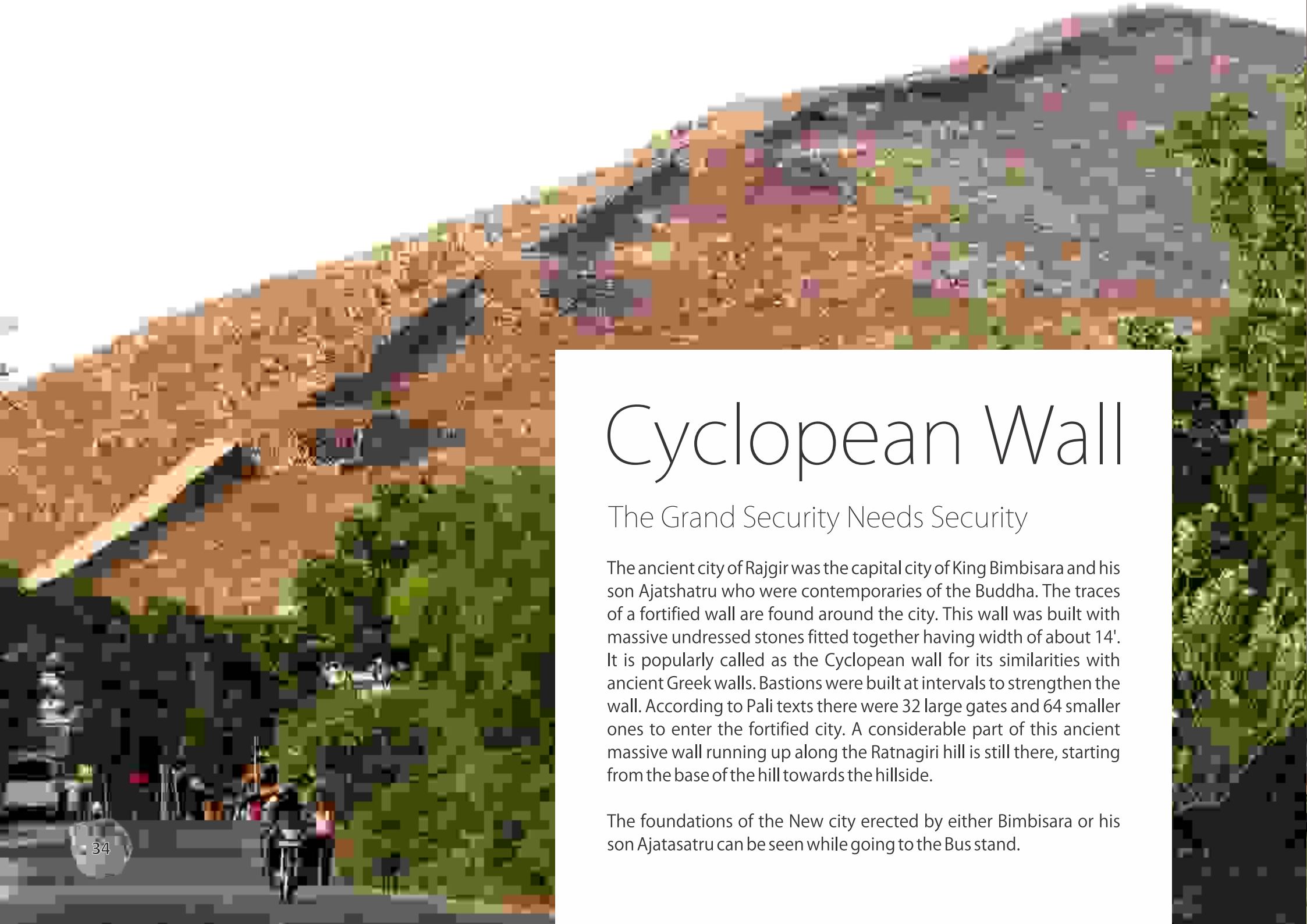
The Indrashala cave was once a very revered destination of the Buddhist devotees. The place where the Buddha meditated for long years

and Indra the King of gods wanted to fathom the Buddha's depth of wisdom. So Indra descended to the Buddha in this cave and asked the 42 most intricate questions. The answers of the Buddha in the form of Sakkapada Sutta deeply pleased the God. It is in this cave only the Buddha is said to have delivered some parts of the Dhammapada also.

There is an unexcavated stupa mound visible on the top which is referred to as Hansa Stupa in the Xuanzang narration. The tale goes as once a monk was looking at the flying goose and lamented that there was no food for the day and one goose dropped dead from the sky. The monks built a stupa over the buried goose thus the name Hansa (Goose) Stupa.

The view of the quaint valley of Parwati dotted with palm trees and the expanse of the wide sky over the green cultivated land is indeed a divine experience.

Once the stupa gets excavated there will be lot to see and learn.



Cyclopean Wall

The Grand Security Needs Security

The ancient city of Rajgir was the capital city of King Bimbisara and his son Ajatshatru who were contemporaries of the Buddha. The traces of a fortified wall are found around the city. This wall was built with massive undressed stones fitted together having width of about 14'. It is popularly called as the Cyclopean wall for its similarities with ancient Greek walls. Bastions were built at intervals to strengthen the wall. According to Pali texts there were 32 large gates and 64 smaller ones to enter the fortified city. A considerable part of this ancient massive wall running up along the Ratnagiri hill is still there, starting from the base of the hill towards the hillside.

The foundations of the New city erected by either Bimbisara or his son Ajatasatru can be seen while going to the Bus stand.

Treasure of Bimbisara

(Sone Bhandar)

In Search of Treasure

The twin rock-cut caves at the Southern face of the Vaibhara hill are popularly called as Son Bhandar as locals believe this was the treasury of the King Bimbisara.

One cave has a doorway through which one enters a large chamber (34'x17'). There is also a rock-cut window. The arched roof of the cave and the polished inner surface of the cave wall have distinct similarities with the Barabar caves. Some inscriptions are visible on the door jambs and inner walls. The other cave is almost at ruined state. There are six small figures of Jain Tirthankaras on the inner wall of this cave. As per some archaeologists these caves may have been excavated during 3rd-4th century CE.



Bimbisara Jail & Ajatshatru Fort

The Tale of a Prison

The excavation of the site revealed a base of about 2 meters thick wall of an enclosed area with circular bastions all around. One iron ring with a loop was the only find of this place. There is no archaeological justification of the name it is famous for. The popular tale goes as that at this place the King Bimbisara was imprisoned and tortured to death by his son Ajatshatru. The only support to this tale is that from this point the Griddhakoota hill, the Buddha's meditating point is visible. As Bimbisara's dying wish was to be able to watch the Buddha, coincidentally this location matches the tale.

According to some researchers, this could have been a part of security and military base at one of the entry points to the fortified capital city.



Ajatshatru Stupa

To the East of Venuvan area, close by the side of the road on it's East are the ruins of a stone structure, built in the fashion of Pippala cave. The site occupies a very prominent location on the road from Rajgir town towards the hot springs.



Maniyar Matth

The Snake Hooded Pots

This site is no doubt one of the most important archaeological sites of Bihar. Sir Alexander Cunningham a British archaeologist known as the father of the Archaeological Survey of India found a Jain temple, named Maniar Matth, on top of a mound in 1861. The survey showed that this place was originally a worshipping area of the local pantheon of Naga cult. The name 'Mani Naga' (the Bejewelled Snake) was found inscribed over a deified Naga (snake) sculpture found in this site. Large pots with unique snake hooded spouts were also found in the excavation of the site.

The unique structure of this site reveals two segments with one cylindrical well like structure at the center and a walled platform structure built around it. The badly damaged stucco images on the wall space have become difficult to recognize properly. It appears from the excavated remains that through the passage of time, different religious sects like the Nagas, Hindus, Buddhists and Jains have made this a significant place of worship.



Ashoka Stupa

According to Fa-Hian, Ajatshatru constructed this, whereas Xuanzang believed that it was constructed by King Ashoka. This is situated in the West of new Rajgir, just across the river Saraswati. The height of the Stupa mound is 10 Meters. Three fragmented Stupas have been found from the middle of the mound. Many bricks of the Mauryan period and votiv stupas of clay were found by digging up to 3 meters on the Western side. These are of 5 cm & 2.5 cm in diameter. Inside each of these stupas, earthen tablets have been found with Buddhist theology written on them.

Remains of Stupa

The ruin of this large stupa is located while one is entering Rajgir but as the board of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) suggests that this stupa has not yet been identified by any ancient text or inscription.

